

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. **It is respectfully noted that independent claim 28, and dependent claims 39, 40 and 43 have been allowed.**

Claims 1-27 (Cancelled)

Claim 28 (Previously Presented) A pattern inspection apparatus comprising:
an image detecting part for detecting a digital image of an object substrate;
a display having a screen on which the digital image of the object substrate
and/or a distribution of defect candidates in a map form are displayable;

an input device for inputting information of a non-inspection region to be
masked on the object substrate by defining a region on the screen on which said
distribution of defect candidates is displayed in a map form;

a memory part for storing coordinate data, pattern data or feature quantity
data of the non-inspection region to be masked on the object substrate inputted on
the screen by the input device; and

a defect judging part in which the digital image detected by the image
detecting part is examined in a state that a region matching with a condition stored in
the memory part is masked and a defect is detected in a region other than said
masked region.

Claim 29 (Currently Amended) A pattern inspection apparatus comprising:

image detecting means for obtaining a digital image of an object substrate on which a pattern is formed, through microscopic observation thereof;

a display having a screen on which the digital image of the object substrate is displayable;

an input device for user-inputting information of a user-originated region to be masked on the object substrate;

defect detecting means for detecting defects of the pattern formed on said object substrate by comparing the digital image attained by the image detecting means with a reference image; and

output means for outputting data regarding the defects detected by the defect detecting means by masking a and excluding defects from the user-originated region matching with the information inputted by the input device.

Claim 30 (Previously Presented) A pattern inspection apparatus as claimed in Claim 29,

wherein the user-originated region is set up using the digital image obtained by the image detecting means through microscopic observation of the object substrate by the input device.

Claim 31-38 (Cancelled)

Claim 39 (Previously Presented) A pattern inspection apparatus as claimed in Claim 28,

wherein said image detecting part includes an electron beam generator which emits an electron beam and a detector which detects a secondary electron emanated from said object substrate by the irradiation of said electron beam, to detect the image of said object substrate.

Claim 40 (Previously Presented) A pattern inspection apparatus as claimed in Claim 28,

wherein said image detecting part includes a light source which illuminates said object substrate with light, and a detector which detects light from the object substrate illuminated by said light source, to detect the image of said object substrate.

Claim 41 (Previously Presented) A pattern inspection apparatus as claimed in Claim 29,

wherein said image detecting part includes an electron beam generator which emits an electron beam and a detector which detects a secondary electron emanated from said object substrate by the irradiation of said electron beam to detect the image of said object substrate.

Claim 42 (Previously Presented) A pattern inspection apparatus as claimed in Claim 29,

wherein said image detecting part includes a light source which illuminates said object substrate with light, and a detector which detects light from the object

substrate illuminated by said light source, to detect the image of said object substrate.

Claim 43 (Previously Presented) A pattern inspection apparatus as claimed in claim 28, wherein the inputting is effected by a human user manually designating the non-inspection region on the display screen.

Claim 44 (Currently Amended) A pattern inspection apparatus as claimed in claim 29, wherein the user-inputting is effected by a human user manually designating the user-originated region to be masked, on the display screen.

Claim 45 (New) A pattern inspection apparatus comprising:
an image detecting part for detecting a digital image of an object substrate;
a display having a screen on which the digital image of the object substrate and/or a distribution of defect candidates in a map form are displayable;
an input device for user-inputting information of a user-originated non-inspection region to be masked on the object substrate by defining a region on the screen on which said distribution of defect candidates is displayed in a map form;
a memory part for storing coordinate data, pattern data or feature quantity data of the user-originated non-inspection region to be masked on the object substrate user-inputted on the screen by the input device; and
a defect judging part in which the digital image detected by the image detecting part is examined in a state that the user-originated non-inspection region

matching with a condition stored in the memory part is masked and a defect is detected in a region other than the user-originated non-inspection region.

Claim 46 (New) A pattern inspection apparatus as claimed in Claim 45, wherein said image detecting part includes an electron beam generator which emits an electron beam and a detector which detects a secondary electron emanated from said object substrate by the irradiation of said electron beam, to detect the image of said object substrate.

Claim 47 (New) A pattern inspection apparatus as claimed in Claim 45, wherein said image detecting part includes a light source which illuminates said object substrate with light, and a detector which detects light from the object substrate illuminated by said light source, to detect the image of said object substrate.

Claim 48 (New) A pattern inspection apparatus as claimed in claim 45, wherein the user-inputting is effected by a human user manually designating the user-originated non-inspection region on the display screen.